

Musical Imaginary, Identity and Representation: The Case of Gentleman the German Reggae Luminary

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In 2003 a German reggae artist named Gentleman was scheduled to perform at the Jamworld Entertainment Center in the south eastern parish of St Catherine, Jamaica. The performance was held at the Sting Festival an annual reggae event that dates back some twenty years. Considered the world's largest one day reggae festival, the event annually boasts an electric atmosphere full of star studded lineups and throngs of hardcore fans. The concert is also notorious for the aggressive DJ clashes¹ and violent incidents that occur. The event was Gentleman's debut performance before a Jamaican audience. Considered a relatively new artist, Gentleman was not the headlining act and was slotted to perform after a number of familiar artists who had already "hyped" the audience with popular dancehall² reggae hits. When his turn came he performed a classical roots³ reggae song "Dem Gone" from his 2002 *Journey to Jah* album. Unhappy with his performance the crowd booed and jeered at him. He did not respond to the heckling and continued performing despite the audience vocal objections. Empty beer bottles and trash were thrown onstage. Finally, unable to withstand the wrath and hostility of the audience he left the stage.

Local online press accounts of the event broadly addressed the violent conduct of the audience by sensationalizing it. The Jamaican Star ran the headline, "Gentleman Stung at Sting" (Cook) whilst staff reporter Claude Mills of the Jamaica Gleaner called it "Terror at Sting" and further informed us that "German-based DJ, Gentleman simply did not live up their hardcore expectations so he received his share of bottles" (Mills). The Jamaica Observer stated "Pandemonium at 'Sting' ...Again" and reported that "from early in the night, the crowd begun

¹ Dancehall is a musical competition where crew members from opposing camps pit their skills against each other.

² Dancehall is a contemporary sub-genre of reggae. It is characterized by a faster tempo, aggressive and violent lyrics and digital instrumentation.

³ Roots sub-genre emerged and dominated in the 70's and 80's.

to stone those artistes who did not shine. Among the casualties were singer Frankie Paul and German-based DJ, Gentleman” (Walker). The online local media coverage joined in by sensationalizing the extra-musical violent behavior for which Sting-Fest has increasingly become notorious for. These media outlets did not offer an interpretive aesthetic analysis of Gentleman’s performance, they simply stated the fact that he failed to live up to audience expectations. Given the circumstances surrounding the event, music journalism ought to have presented the readers with some aesthetic description of Gentleman’s performance; the reports of the concert and Gentleman’s performance in particular sorely lacked in any discussion, evaluation or interpretation of his music and performance. The disproportionate correspondence fuels our need to unpack the event. After all, was it not a music festival?

This was a pivotal watershed moment for the 36 year old white male German musician. Given the site and audience, for Gentleman, this performance marked a critical moment in his fledgling career. A review of reggae festivals conducted by Billboard Magazine concluded that, “as a barometer of who’s hot and who’s not in the cutting edge reggae scene, no other concert event matches Sting. A sting performance can make or break your career” (Oumano 45). The Jamaican Gleaner also echoes the same sentiments and mentions that,

Sting has developed along the lines of an unwritten, unspoken and unacknowledged consensus that this is the place where the ultimate symbolic fires are lit and the phoenix consumed. It sets the stage for the rebirth. Cultural kings are dethroned and new ones crowned (Hope).

This was Gentleman’s moment to showcase his artistic talent before the right audience. Unfortunately, the performance proved to be disastrous moment for the up and coming artist. Although Gentleman cut a frustrated and dejected figure at the event, he has since within the last

decade become a highly successful globally acclaimed reggae artist. His fourth album *Confidence* released in 2004 topped the charts in both Germany and Austria. Considered a prominent figure in the European reggae and has forged strong ties with the Jamaican reggae music industry. Gentleman has toured and collaborated with some of the biggest artists and producers of the reggae world, including Beenie Man, Tanya Stevens, Luciano, Sugar Minot and has worked with legendary producers like Sly Dunbar and Don Corleone.

The success of a German reggae artist certainly appears to be a bizarre cultural borrowing given the charged historicity of slavery the genre indexes. Moreover, the genre emerged and developed during the contentious period of colonial Jamaica. These two historical periods have informed and shaped the racially divisive discourse inherent in the genre. The cultural thinking and archival knowledge of the age mobilized a particular kind of discourse framed in a dichotomous worldview of ‘we and dem’,⁴ colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. The prevailing mindset of the period coupled with Gentleman’s lack of connection to this history situates him outside of its cultural boundaries. How then could he become successful in it?

In light of Gentleman’s sustained success in this distinct, circumscribed and emotively charged space, complexities surface that go beyond the normative approach that questions the merits and crimes of cultural borrowing. Existing evaluative criterion, for musically imagined performances, such as “faithful” or unfaithful” cannot suffice to fully inform us. Furthermore, an approach that goes beyond asking whether the cultural borrowing is purely imaginative, fantasized or eroticized is required. Thus, I want to comprehend how, according to Georgina Born, “the musical representations of sociocultural identity come, *after the fact*, to be re-interpreted and debated discursively and, out of this process, *reinserted* as representations into the changing socio-cultural formation (36). Firstly, by paying attention to the extra-musical

⁴ Patois, the Jamaican lexified English language. Title song in Bob Marley’s 1980 *Upspring* album

ideological signifiers and aesthetic properties that symbolize reggae I wish to understand the negotiations and mediations that occur during co-optation. Secondly, I would like to know the dynamics involved when a particularly parochial cultural expression, is appropriated and subsequently *re-inserted* into the changing social ground from which it emerged. In other words, how does Gentleman project the subject position of colonial subaltern *in* and *through* his music? Furthermore, I assert that the audience reaction at Sting marks an antecedent point of alliance – an alliance that had to have occurred before any discussion, debate and subsequent insertion of Gentleman into the changing socio-cultural formation materialized. Furthermore, the alliance denotes the distinct moment when musical imaginary practices -after undergoing varying stages of composition, production and dissemination- result in audience reception. The significance of any evaluative criteria at this precise moment, whether negative or positive, should be of little consequence. What is pertinent to note is how through a social confirmation process an imagined musical representation becomes crystalized. Indeed, Gentleman's later sustained success in the genre, despite the initial negative confirmation, illustrates the instability of how audiences assess performances in space and time. It never is a subscribed assessment that is fixed and static. As the old phrase goes "one day your hot the next you're not." Nonetheless, it would be irresponsible to completely discard of such assessments. Why did the crowd react that way? What was it about his performance that did not appeal to them? To that end we need to fully unpack and culturally explore the event.

In this increasingly globalized and decentered era of musical production and consumption scholarly ideas regarding socio-cultural identity, representation, and musically imagined communities are being rethought in interesting ways. Fabian Holt's recent ethnographic and historical work points to the processes involved in genre formation and the conditions of

production and consumption that resulted in racialized music categories within the US.⁵

Similarly Karl Hagstrom Miller also traces the historical cultural shifts in the southern musical landscape that culminated in the construction of distinct music genres we now consider associated with particular racial and ethnic identities. Millers regional investigation offers us a narrative of how the various projects orchestrated by the music industry, artists and writers resulted “in a sonic demarcation that mirrored the material conditions emerging under Jim Crow” (28).

Furthermore, Marcyliena Morgan’s recent ethnographic account examines the ways the aesthetics of West Coast Hip Hop youth culture index, co-opt and transform earlier African American traditions and subsequently formulate new interpretations of representation and identity. Asserting that, while the discourse style is based on “direct critique, contestation and fragmentation ... [and appears to disrupt political movement] it may also act to reclaim and recuperate lost space” (44).Morgan points out how the aesthetics of the hip hop culture, albeit situated in a contested liminal space has the potential “to create a new or at least renovated arena for activity” (50). Likewise, Halifu Osumare examines the epistemology of global Hip Hop and the ways they are conceived and expressed in local sites. Osumare illustrates how the processual mode of expression, rooted in an African aesthetic and black popular culture becomes a salutary and communal aesthetic “with a particular kind of socialization process that unites the hip hop generation across ethnicities, cultures and nations” (58).

Other scholars offer a different perspective in their interpretations of the role music plays in shaping socio-cultural identities. Sociologist George Lipsitz focuses on the ways we think of and understand the utility of music. Lipsitz recent scholarship explores the range of popular music’s in the US and the communities of people from which they emerge. In analyzing the

⁵ See Holt Fabian

social and cultural contexts of different genres he illustrates popular music's potential as an alternative and valuable source of evidence about social history. According to him music when interpreted correctly can be read "dialogically as change over time" (16). In his view the role and significance of music goes beyond mere aesthetic qualities and holds more value for us as an alternative archival source of social history. His earlier scholarship reflects the same position and in that view, "specific musical tastes always reflect important social statements and experiences that seem only incidentally related to the music itself" (ix). Lipsitz point is that we are always socially and historically situated and our aesthetic responses to music primarily stem from that. In this view musical pleasures and experiences are shaped by social-cultural conditions. Considering the assumptions regarding genre formation and racialized sound, Lipsitz conclusions, would in part, account for why different social groups would gravitate towards different genres of music. Any relation to music beauty or taste in his view is incidental and circumstantial.

Other scholars take a different approach by according the aesthetic properties of musical beauty equal consideration in affecting our social experiences. Barry Shank locates what Lipsitz considers an "incidental relationship" within an aesthetic paradigm that accords perception some agentive capacity. Shank posits that while musical beauty lacks absolute social articulation and ideological grounding, auditory experiences have the potential to "affectively bind our sensibilities into patterns of engagement with the social world" (834). Furthermore, scholars such as Roshanak Kheshti explore the ways in which world music practices structure audible perceptions of a racialized and gendered kind. Kheshti contends that music industry practices play a key role in the social process in which the, "consumer is called up to sonically construct the other through listening" (720). In the aural imaginary, listening becomes the privileged

sensory mode where the consumer's ear becomes the symbolic site of "aural and affective interaction with the other of world music" (716). It is an interaction that is always informed and shaped by relations of dominance. The racialized and gendered music filtered through the consumer's listening practices and ear become the foremost site for producing difference.

The brief glimpse of contemporary scholarship we have just addressed illustrates the various ways in which popular culture studies has been able to pay greater attention to ideas of scene and locality, aesthetics and social relevance. The geographic sites addressed by these scholars range from global, regional, urban, diaspora to transnational. In these varying sights questions regarding music consumption, taste cultures and youth culture are being explored in interesting ways. The points they raise lead to new ideas that rethink the relationship between music and the social ground in refreshing ways. The fresh approaches in turn articulate new ideas about popular culture aesthetics, representation, identity and the musical imaginary. Indeed as Simon Frith points out, "what's at issue is not which analytical technique better get at music's "meaning", but how to account for the different musical experiences" (iii) - a poignant question when considering the politics of appropriation, representation and identity. Thus it is the goal of this paper to pay equal consideration to both musical and extra musical dynamics and attempt to rethink the ways in which they interact. I hope to draw on the extensive body of work mentioned. It is with this aim in mind that I hope to contribute, however slightly, towards the ongoing discussion on how to account for the different musical experiences. Above all, I wish to bring aesthetic evaluations closer to musical practice and experience.

The thematic progression of this paper begins by examining the generative processes involved in the production and consumption of reggae music in Jamaica. The aesthetic analysis will explore how these generative mechanisms resulted, over time, in stylistic changes to the

sound. The historical analysis will consider the ways social actions informed and resulted in aesthetic changes to the music. The approach remains far removed from a strictly musicological endeavor. We will not be looking at the formal internal properties of music divorced from socio-cultural context. In addition, the inferences reached will not mirror the traditional homology model which draws parallels and argues that internal musical structure reflects underlying social relations.

The second part will focus on articulating the extra-musical signs and symbols that have come to signify the subaltern subject position. The focus on Rastafarian influence on the genre will be limited to assessing the socio-cultural implications of the faith as a social movement and more less its theological principles. An analysis of Rastafarian rhetorical techniques will reflect the aesthetics involved during reggae performance. Foreshadowing an overview of the social ground from which reggae developed, both politically and aesthetically, will be a more focused case study that interrogates how, in and through his music, Gentleman has immersed himself in this ground.

Aesthetics and Social Relevance of Reggae

Trans-Atlantic slave connections historically tie African musical forms to those of African diaspora populations. The stylistic characteristics of African music's are retained albeit in localized forms. The legacy of African drumming, vocal and dance techniques persist in contemporary performances. In addition, borrowed elements such as melodic and harmonic patterns and instrumentation can be seen in African diaspora musical forms. Popular music genres of Jazz, blues, R&B, hip-hop and rap all draw on, to some degree or another, on the aesthetics of traditional African music. In addition, Afro-Latin cultural expressions, such as

Salsa, draws heavily on the different facets of the hybrid Mestizaje heritage from which it emerged. Jamaican music is no exception in this cultural preservation. The trajectory of music transformation in Jamaica is one marked by continuity and change. It would be an exhaustive project to trace this aesthetic cultural history, thus in regards to our interrogation, our point of reference begins circa 1960 and the development of ska the original pre-reggae sound.

Ska blended a variety of musical styles and mixed different ingredients from mento, Jamaican folk music and from African American styles of jazz, blues and R&B. This syncretic musical blending eventually resulted in a unique sound and rhythmic pattern. However, the blending did not necessarily background the influences and often brought them to the forefront. The presence of African American jazz horn arrangements and R&B guitar styles and chords are clearly audible in early ska. Blues and African vocal styling's such as call and response are visible in the aesthetics. In similar fashion to most western music ska is played in 4/4 time or what is considered common time.⁶ However, during the co-opting process, the rhythm was radically reorganized. What distinguishes ska from other, earlier as well as incorporated forms is the stylistic innovation that placed heavy emphasis on guitar chords picking out the offbeat (Toynbee 88). The innovation meant that the rhythm guitar chords in ska picked off the offbeat the, "and" in the underlined sequence (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &) whereas popular American styles accented the downbeat (1 & 2 & 3 & 4). The offbeat guitar chords were intensely isolated and strongly emphasized by the piano, guitar and brass sections. While these instruments anchoring the offbeat sound, the drums and walking bass accented the downbeats of 2 and 4 providing a steady repetitive groove. The structured sound of the drums and bass establishing a basic rhythm but nevertheless always remained subordinate to the offbeat instrumentation.

⁶ Four quarter notes per bar

So what does this sound like? There are different ways artists voiced, accented and pushed this stylistic marker to the front. In Jimmy Cliff's ska hit *Miss Jamaica* the horns playing in quick, short bursts on each offbeat stresses the guitars offbeat staccato chop giving the syncopated rhythm a bolder and brassier tone. The tight and repeated horn lines, coupled by the steady backbeat of the snare drums and the picking guitar chords give us that characteristic driving stutter and syncopated rhythm.

The sub-genre of rocksteady which emerged circa 1966 followed ska. In spite of rocksteady resembling the same instrumental qualities of ska there are two distinct features that clearly delineate the sub genres. Firstly, rocksteady has a slower and more intense tempo that can range anywhere from 80 to 100 beats per minute. The tempo of Ska on the other hand can range anywhere from 110 to 135 beats per minute (Chang 64). The heartbeat of this new rhythm was a slowed down tempo dictated by the kick drum kicking on the third beat only as opposed to the second and fourth beat of ska (Bradley 165). Dropping of the first beat is a key musical technique that forms the basis of most Jamaican music. Traditionally in Western popular music's the first down beat is usually the strongest accent. In rocksteady the de-emphasis on the first beat and subsequent shift to strong emphasis on the third beat radically altered normative drumming conventions.

Secondly, the introduction of the bass guitar as the lead instrument also marked a shift in rhythmic pattern (Toynbee). While the electric guitar strumming on the offbeat, the amplified bass became the prominent lead instrument in the arrangement. Previous ska did not place much emphasis on the bass. In rocksteady the rhythm of the amplified bass with its characteristic stutter and drive pattern anchored the rhythm providing a backbone for other instruments to play on. The bass is capable of supporting itself and at the same time can support all the other

elements in the music. As Bradley informs us, the second stylistic change that marks rocksteady from ska, “is the increased frequency, rocksteady musicians turned to the bass guitar to augment their musical statement” (166). The emphasis points to a stylistic aesthetic where riddim⁷ takes priority over melody and harmony.

Bob Marley’s “Three little birds” exemplifies the rocksteady, otherwise known as one-drop, aesthetic markers that have come to signify reggae music. Again, what does this sound like? The heavy bass guitar “chops” on the second and fourth while the drums kick and snare on the third beat. We hear the side stick snare of the drum-set coupled with cymbals accenting the third beat. The side stick snare drumming technique gives us the presence of a thin crisp metallic “tsssss” sound that fills in the spaces left by the emphasized low frequency repetitive bass line. The repeating bass line remains consistent throughout the song. The hard and grainy syncopated stutter that drove the rhythm in ska, are smoothed out by fluidly filling the spaces in rocksteady. Following rocksteady emerged reggae circa 1968. Musically reggae incorporated ska’s offbeat guitar chords and rocksteady’s slowed down bass line. However, the bass in reggae was amplified to a much higher level than in rocksteady. In addition, in similar fashion to rocksteady, reggae further divested itself of the strong horn arrangement that were present in ska. The organ was introduced and assumed “an important supportive role, providing a colorful, rich texture to the arrangement” (King 59). Moreover, in reggae the snare accents that were present in the 2 and 4 of Ska were omitted giving it the illusion of a slower tempo than rocksteady. This stylistic change created more space for improvisation around the beats. The aural space created provided other instrumental arrangements to fill in. In addition to the instrumental gap fills the space was sufficient enough for vocal phrasings of, both lead and backup, to intertwine and interact in new complex ways (Bradley 165). These combinations of sounds remain the distinguishing factors

⁷ Jamaican patois pronunciation of the English word rhythm

that separate reggae music from other music's. Thus, this background information serves to frame our analysis of Gentleman's appropriation of the sound. Any question of authenticity in regards to Gentleman's appropriation will require us to compare how well the artists captures these combinations of sound in his music and performance.

The creative process of musical production in Jamaica that resulted in sub-genre formations did not occur in a vacuum. The transformation within the sub-genres was just a fragment of a much larger whole transformation of Jamaican society. Change did not occur in music styles only, but the very social ground from which they emerged was undergoing transformation. The reconstruction was in large part due to what Jason Toynbee considers hierarchical and relational generative mechanisms of society. Toynbee's interrogates the "nature of celebrity, creativity, performance as well as the relationship between music and industry" (17) and in the process correlates the relationship between social and aesthetic transformation. The Critical Realism lens Toynbee uses enables him to correlate the reciprocal relations between social-cultural conditions and aesthetic innovations that actualized the transformation process of Jamaican society. The CR lens enables Toynbee to interrogate the complex ways in which cultural activities and economic forces are inextricably tied. This leads him to one conclusion-the fact that cultural activities and economic forces are inextricable tied and the production of reggae music could not exist without the capitalist mode of production.⁸ Toynbee's causal interpretations inject new life into base determinism⁹. Music production in Jamaica owes much to the dancehall mode of production that encourages participation between performer and audience. It is through this interaction that the musical signatures of this sound communicate qualities of the subaltern to the mass audiences.

⁸ Toynbee injects new life into base determinism

⁹ As opposed to post-structuralism which sought to impose limits on base

Intensification is one key generative process that Toynbee asserts influenced creativity that resulted in sub-genre formation. Intensification occurs when a specific variable in a cohesive home style music arrangement is broken down, altered and reinforced. *Intensification* results, “from “an orally derived imperative to reiterate, to do the same thing again, but now applied to a specific, micro-phonetic, parameter of a given style”(102). Home style refers to the music elements situated within the practices of specific musical cultures. In the transformation from ska to rocksteady to reggae the amplification of bass guitar is one such notable home style stylistic change.

Translation, a second generative process Toynbee identifies is the appropriation of music elements outside the home style. Elements that can range from, among others meter, dynamics, harmony, melody to the pitch, rhythm, texture, musical instruments and voice. The process of *translation* begins when one repeatedly listens to a song or musical sound outside their home style. In the efforts to comprehend the new elements artists incorporate new rules based on what they already know from their own home style. Thus, through this “repetitious phonographic orality ... [the new sound created] results in unanticipated differences [...] because new rules engender new sounds” (Toynbee 102). During the sub-genre transformation period Jamaican artists had access to American radio stations and recordings and they repeatedly listened to Blues, Jazz and R&B sounds. Toynbee recalls how when listening to Marley’s “I’m Still Waiting” you understand it to be a new sound, yet it clearly references The Impressions “Gypsy woman” (Toynbee 96). The sound appears to be very different yet there are residual traces that are very similar of African American R&B stylings.

The processes that aesthetically delineated reggae sub-genres did not happen overnight but rather occurred over a long cyclical period. To contextualize the aesthetic turn we need to

examine the socio-cultural relations that facilitated and made possible the cyclical process. Music production in Jamaica in the post-colonial era of ska, rocksteady and reggae was an interactive endeavor involving artists, producers, sound system operators and audience members. Firstly, collective collaboration between musicians and producers fueled creativity to new heights. Musicians would work together and borrow from what was considered common stock musical materials. They would listen to other artist's material, *translate* from both home styles and outside styles, mixing and incorporating ingredients. Secondly, increased migration from the rural towns to the urban center of Kingston created a middle class working consumer (Toynbee 68-70). The urban migration signaled the moment Jamaica was entering what we now consider Third World modernity. However, the lack of employment and increased poverty meant that the average Kingston inhabitant could not afford a personal home record playback system. They turned to the Kingston sound system¹⁰ which charged a modest fee for entertainment. In addition, the sound system stimulated the local uncertain economy by providing concession stands that sold food and alcohol. It was not uncommon for thousands to attend on any given night (Bradley 54). There was intense rivalry between sound systems and "those that had the greatest records drew the biggest crowds" (Chang 19). In this manner, the sound system played a role as the "leading mode of musical dissemination. Leading in the sense of making taste and generating acclaim" (Toynbee 84). Artists and producers benefitted by testing their new sounds before a live audience. To quench the audience's thirst for new sounds, the activity of musical production from writing songs, arranging to recording was conducted at an accelerated pace. In turn, the audience played a participatory role in either rejecting new sounds or affirming them. People wanted danceable music and reggae riddim is first and foremost based on a danceable beat. During the, early ska era "the words to a song didn't matter much, but the beat had to be

¹⁰ Large heavily amplified mobile disco full with generator, turntables and huge speakers

danceable. As long as the beat was sweet and the words were not so pretentiously ridiculous” (Chang 58). Prince Buster, an artist who played an instrumental role in shaping the music, recalls the audience participatory role descriptively.

New Records that made the place come really alive would end with a barrage of shouts to *Lick it back*, or *Wheel and come again* – an occurrence that would be repeated dozens of times, as long as that tune continued to move the crowd. If a record was wrong, though, and the crowd didn’t like it, they’d make themselves felt just as lustily. You’d hardly be able to hear the music from the booing and the operator had to change it double quick. (Bradley 10).

The inclusion of semantic content in our aesthetic analysis of music begins with the advent of the “roots and culture” strand of reggae¹¹. Roots reggae signaled the embrace of Rastafarian ideals with more militant and politically charged themes. Rastafarian epistemology indexes the long and contentious history of slavery, colonialism and more recently neo-colonialism. Influenced and guided by the stirring directives of race activist and cultural preservationist Marcus Garvey, Rastafarianism advocates for Afrocentric pride and Pan-African social and political aspirations. It denounces racial oppression and eschews materialism and calls for a conscientious social justice agenda. The ideological resistance and cultural revitalization project of Rastafarianism peculiarly combines with other constituting ethos of the faith that embrace messages of “equal rights and justice” and universal peace. The Rastafarian engagement with the colonial and post-colonial dominant power structures is a long history that I will not belabor here. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to note our point of reference begins at the point where the influence of Rastafarian spirituality increased in Jamaican society and in particular its relationship to reggae.

11. Roots and Culture describes the spiritual, political and emotively charged semantic content of the genre.

Rastafarianism was a relatively marginal religious and social movement prior to the arrival of Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie to Jamaica in 1968. After Selassie's seminal visit conversion to the faith grew expeditiously. Bob Marley, perhaps the most famous cultural icon Jamaica has ever produced, with his rebellious looks and uncompromising lifestyle was a leading exponent of the faith. It is through him, and other Rasta musicians, that the spiritual and conscious philosophy of the faith was injected into the music. The socio-political discontent of his period manifested in scathing critiques of the dominant power structures. During Marley generation social critiques were aimed at the post-colonial Jamaican institutions that had come to replace colonial imperialism. The generation of youth who grew up in what Toynbee labels an "emergent social structure" (55) had a heightened sense of race and class awareness. Kingston population was rapidly growing and social, political and economic conditions did not significantly change with independence. Narratives of post-colonial national commitment never materialized for the unemployed, poverty stricken shanty town dwellers. The youth remained alienated by the transition to post-colonialism and the entrenchment of the power of white and brown middle class elite (king 57). Resistance to the repressive Jamaican socio-political system was the semantic theme of the period.

One key rhetorical device employed in reggae used to articulate and critique society is the mythic and iconic term Babylon. It is perhaps the most referenced floating signifier discussed in reggae. Babylon represents evilness, materialism, greed and everything else considered detrimental to the social and spiritual wellbeing of Rasta. Babylon is never fixed nor anchored to one particular meaning and always points beyond. Babylon is viewed as manifest through the social, political, economic, and religious institutions of power. It can mean so many different things to so many different people over different periods. Post- colonial Jamaica during the early

years of Marley's generation epitomized the ideological construct of Babylon. Later articulations broadened and Babylon came to signify the imperialism and capitalism of first world nations. Babylon as a modern reality can represent everything from racism, poverty, capitalism to pollution and mechanization. Reggae protest themes have since re-positioned into a "universal" and much larger Pan-African articulation for social justice. Contemporary critiques of Babylon discuss the "exile(s) created by transatlantic slavery and recalls the origins of captivity and relates it to the materially deprived economic situations, political disadvantages and living conditions on the margins of western consumer societies in the present" (Zips 20).

While the social commentary serves, at once, to address immediate social conditions it more potently serves as an apparatus with specific goals to preserve the emotive cultural heritage. The veneration of black culture in this subaltern archive has been circulated and reinforced and is deeply rooted in symbolic and metaphoric expression that Rasta philosophy considers Word-Sound-Power. Barrett argues that "word-sound power is a way of speaking in which a tension between Creole and Standard-English words and meanings are used to contest traditional constructions of identity" (107). The utility of this archived narration extends beyond preserving. The episteme of slavery and colonialism coupled by socio-political conditions of post-colonial Jamaica enabled reggae to emerge as a discourse that embodied the hopes, fears, certainties and uncertainties of the generation. Marley's "We and Dem" succinctly captures the skepticism. In the philosophy of Word-Sound-Power talk as trauma is succeeded by talk as pedagogy.

We no know how we and dem a-go work this out, oy! / We no know how we and
dem a-go work it out / But someone will 'ave to pay / For the innocent blood / That

they shed every day / Oh, children, mark my word / Chorus / But we no have no

friends/ In-a high society, yea-a-eah / We no have no friends /Oh, mark my identity

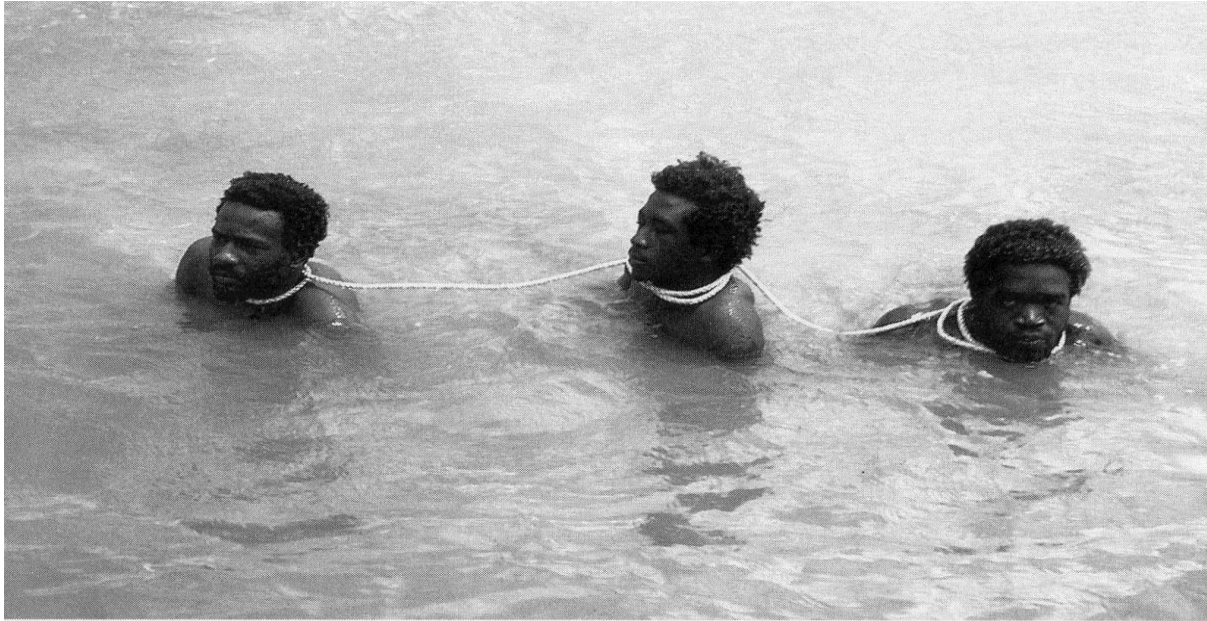
Reggae music employs dread talk or Rasta speech which is patios that is elevated to a more philosophical level. It is intended to contest the hegemonic language forms. For instance, the pronoun “me” is perceived as subservient and as representative of the self-degradation that was expected of the slave by their masters and is thus replaced with “I” as opposed to the servile “me” (Owens 65). In addition, words are often inverted to rid them of the perceived subservience. The word “understand” is expressed as “over-stand” and similarly the word “oppress” is connoted as “down-press”. Words that have the “de” sounding letters are often replaced with “liv” due to the negative connotations in dismal words like destruction, demolish, devastation and death (Owens 70-72). The oral tropes are part of the aesthetics that positions itself in opposition to the hegemonic language.

In addition, the vocabulary of dread talk is metaphoric and words can have elements of indirection where the obvious significance can be totally different from the real significance. One would have to be socialized into the vocabulary to understand this shared cultural knowledge. The double entendre in reggae is misdirecting and can be lost in translation to those situated outside the communities who have shared knowledge of the speech patterns. The apparent significance of the statements or words may be totally different from the real significance. Bob Marley’s “Burning and Looting” song is the quintessential example of a double entendre rhetorical device. Speaking over the track Marley explains the rationale behind the aggressive meaning of the title by confirming that, “It is not really literally burning down the city, or burning down. It’s the burning out certain things in our mind. Fe live in a one harmony” (Brey).

The philosophical *entendre* calls to action a higher cognitive awareness in resisting the temptations of Babylon. Cognitive awareness remains a crucial component of Rastafarian philosophy. The oft sung couplet in “Concrete jungle” captures this idea “emancipate yourselves from mental slavery/ none but ourselves can free our minds” (Marley). Rasta also recognizes that cultural contact is inevitable. They are not calling for an isolationist position, but rather demanding self-respect. That self- respect entails understanding the language, the meaning and intention.

You need to access what I have to say from my experience if you are going to make sense of this music. You need to come listen to my language, to what I say in the language that I speak, in the idiom that I speak, and then maybe it will make sense to you, If it does, then we are talking (Foehr 107).`

Any contact between “races” calls for the other party to have a working knowledge of Rasta community speech patterns to fully engage with them; a speech pattern that articulates a particular historicized black experience.



Burning Spear, with regular back-up singers Rupert Wellington and Delroy Hines, re-enact 'Slavery Days' in the mid-1970s. (*Dennis Morris*)

Fig 1. Photo by Dennis Morris.

The image of Burning Spear and his backup singers illustrates the functionality and value of the genres discourse.¹² Rasta chose to re-enact the conditions that inform them in order to get a better understanding of their heritage. The music embodies and indexes both the past and present lived experiences.

Gentleman Case Study

Above all, Gentleman's cooptation of this deeply contextualized cultural politics remains the foremost contentious site of negation. Incidentally early music journalism focused heavily on his use of patois, Rasta oral tropes and metaphoric references. Baz Dreinsenger review of Gentleman's 2004 album *Confidence* in the Village Voice is a good example.

¹² Truth values are of no consequence. That is in Foucauldian terms as long as it fulfills its power requirement of circulation, the flaws, contradictions and gaps in this discourse will remain accepted.

Bad Patois is a deadly comic distraction and even an insult when sullyng a dialect whose use suggests membership in a historically oppressed community Gentleman has lived on and off in Jamaica for a decade.; listening to his singles especially the breathtaking 2004 ballad “Intoxication” on Don Corleone’s blockbuster “Drop Leaf” riddim- it’s tough to tell he’s not Jamaican (2).

Elsewhere, Cook of the Jamaican Online Star wrote, “somewhere between Germany and Jamaica, Gentleman emerged from the cocoon of Tillman Otto, complete with fluent Jamaican speech patterns and rhythm in his bone (2). We need to ask ourselves how Otto Tillman, the son of a Lutheran preacher, born in Osnabruck, Germany and raised in the metropolis center of Cologne; transform into a prolific reggae artist? Where and how did it all start?

In that respect, Roshanak Kheshti concept of the “aural imaginary” lends our analysis some much needed insight. According to Kheshti, “the ear is the foremost site of signification ... where the consumer is called on to sonically construct the Other through listening” (712). Her ethnographic work of Kinship records reveals music industry practices preference of sound over lyrical content in providing the consumers a racialized and gendered music. In her view the affective relations result in shared communities of sentiment- an emotional space where consumers are affectively connected to music producers. Kheshti believes these relations are always often structured in relations of power. The imagined relations never actualize and shared sentiment becomes a mark of that community – a sentimental public sphere. She emphasizes this distinction.

The culture of circulation as a community of sentiment that imagines itself as affectively bound to the music, performers and one another but, most importantly, distinguished from the

performers and the places they musically signify, a distinction critical to the affective pleasures experienced in the world music's aural imaginary (720).

How does Gentleman fit into this narrative of imagined communities? Well, prior to Gentleman's immersion into the culture, the exposure to reggae music was first and foremost through listening. In a 2005 interview with the *Jamaican Star*, Gentleman recalled his socialization into reggae music culture informing us that, "Reggae music was always in my family. My brother had a nice selection of reggae music. He is four years older than me. He always went to the flea market and buy records" (Cook). Up until, "he first travelled to the island of Jamaica when he 17 years old" (Cook) the primary contact zone for Gentleman was the 'aural imaginary' and listening was the privileged sensory mode of experiencing reggae. For Gentleman, the experience of travelling to Jamaica and enjoying the pleasurable music firsthand altered the "aural imaginary" experience. According to him, "the bug hit hard ... [and] from that time my whole life was getting money for the next trip" (Cook). Listening to the music eventually lead to a disruption in the imaginary where he sought to immerse himself in the culture. Gentleman took the shared sentimental bond a step further and rather than remain in an imaginative stage he made contact.

The disruption of a purely imaginative stage imposes limits on Khesti's concept which only suffices up until the point cultural contact is made. We need to look beyond the "aural imaginary" to understand the dynamics involved when through listening ideological norms are troubled. To this end Barry Shank's ideas regarding the political agency of musical beauty can offer us the necessary illumination. To simplify Shanks layered argument, the affective process begins when we are confronted, through listening, with the semantic emptiness of musical beauty. We try to make sense and find some form of meaning in music's self-referential

engagement with its own processes.¹³ To paraphrase Shank, the semantic void beckons us towards an auditory engagement with the sound. Towards these efforts, we lean in and pay attention to the structured sonic relations¹⁴ (834). When we actively listen and encounter new, familiar or unfamiliar sounds our sensibilities get shifted. Our interpretation of what is familiar and unfamiliar is always based on some contingent pre-existing formations of difference. In other words, when Gentleman first encountered the new formations of sonic difference inherent in reggae— mainly the one drop technique and the offbeat guitar chop—that was the political moment.

Indeed, as Shank states “the experience of musical beauty when it emerges from unfamiliar sounds or surprising combination of familiar sounds has the affective capacity to re-distribute an auditory sensible and to change thereby the sonic sens of the political” (843). Perhaps another poignant example of the political moment is Toynbe’s account of Wayne Perkins the guitarist called in for a Wailers session of “Concrete Jungle”. He documents Perkins reaction, “as Perkins describes it, at first he simply could not find the ‘one’, in other words the first beat of the bar. They started playing in this strange music I’d never heard in my life – the R and B, the church music – this was backwards” (146). Even the seasoned musician could not escape being beckoned to lean in, engage and assess the unfamiliar sound. The conclusions he reached were based on already existing musical relations that were familiar to him. But how does this relate to Gentleman? We can only make the crudest assumptions based on his listening practices and the interviews he provides regarding musical beauty. When the then Tillman Otto made his first trip to Jamaica he purchased recordings for further consumption. Cook’s three part

¹³ As opposed to non-referential, Shank believes music meaning can be found in the self-referential processes. That is the flows of rhythms, pitch based tensions etc that result in relations of difference.

¹⁴ Structured sonic relations in the sense of pitch, range, dissonance, flow of rhythms etc emerging from the self referential processes.

interview with the artist recalls how he “... got some seven inch records from Jamaica and ...rented a PA system and played them.” Gentleman reproduced the dancehall settings, full with speakers and recordings that were prevalent in Jamaica in his hometown. In addition, Gentleman understands the significance of sound over lyrical content well enough to articulate that, “a good song starts with a good chord. Then you find the lyrics. It’s never the other way around”

(GertozZz). We can infer from this statement that although the lyrical content may “speak to him” the sonic relations of sound is more appealing. The appealing structure of musical beauty in reggae compelled an engagement, in Gentleman, that altered his imaginary musical experience. It lead him to shift his sens from mere consumption to the practice of composition, reproduction, dissemination and finally to perform the parochial black cultural form before the very audience who produced it. The question at this point remains, what does the reproduction sound like?

Before conducting any analysis of Gentleman’s sound, we need to revisit the question of ‘authenticity’ in reggae music. In popular culture scholarship, the question of authenticity in regards to the global reproduction of reggae often explores how new identity formations occur by contextualizing the different combinations sounds produced in relation to their respective sites. Timothy Taylors *Global Pop* examines the dancehall-bhangra music of UK’s Apache Indian and interprets the fusion music’s potential in relation to Britain’s emergent diverse ethnic mosaic. Nonetheless, Taylor’s interrogation of the fusion between dancehall and bhangra in the UK remains implicitly divorced, from the original social habitus dancehall emerged from. In that aspect it offers little historical background and comparison in which “authenticity” can be framed.

Similarly, Paul Gilroy's interrogates the politics of authenticity by cross examining how explicit forms of black culture are manifest in different diaspora communities¹⁵. Gilroy problematizes the nature of cultural borrowing, displacement and transformation of these distinct forms by articulating that the black Atlantic diaspora is a space of transnational cultural construction that privileges hybridity. This space neither meets the essentialist perspective which situates a racial essence in black culture nor fully fits the anti-essentialist approach which rejects the idea of a singular uniting core. Nonetheless, Gilroy's notion of hybridity and assertions of a black essence as a "changing same" rather than an unchanging one, still runs the risk of partially articulating essentialist assumptions. In this view, the syncretic complexity and hybridity of black expressive culture troubles the idea of a singular authentic cultural form. At this point we need to ask ourselves, how can we gauge Gentleman's authenticity in performing the highly politicized musical form?

A review of music journalism reveals a sorely lacking interpretation of how Gentleman's authenticity is enacted through his music and performance. The Beat review comically confirms that, "Germany's dancehall luminary, Gentleman, not only can sell out huge stadiums in Europe, but he has bona-fide credibility in Jamaica where foreign artists are usually about as well received as Iraqi men in U.S. airports" (Gardner). The commentary fails to adequately discuss the ways in which his credibility is "bona-fide." In a review of Gentleman's album *Journey to Jah* Teacher of Reggae Vibes offers us a more encouraging discussion. He states that,

Gentleman's early enthusiasm for reggae in all its colorful variety has grown to a natural self-sufficiency and expanded consciousness which surpasses a simple knowledge of styles and sounds ... this makes him not only one of Germanys most influential reggae artists, but ...[it] also give his music an authenticity. We're treated to a set of brimful

¹⁵ See Chapter 3" Jewels from Bondage: Black Music and the politics of authenticity in Gilroys The Black Atlantic

modern roots reggaeimpeccable fresh riddims, a crisp and clear sound, good production work, conscious lyrics and wicked combinations with top flight Jamaican artists. Don't be lead astray by the fact Gentleman is a white German guy, cause his lyrics and themes are authentic and he definitely has a style of his own (Teacher).

In my analysis of Gentleman's reproduction I will explore the ways in which he reproduces the various stylistic characteristics that have come to signify reggae music. These range from the vocal inflections, different rhetorical strategies to the metaphorical and coded references to history. However, above all, I understand authenticity in terms of his ability to reproduce the characteristics of reggae music syntax in his sound and through his performance. I will look at the ways in which he alters, modifies or reproduces the sonic sound and verbal aesthetics associated with reggae. The case study will cross examine the dynamics of two different modes of production. Firstly, we will explore the reproduction of reggae music in Gentleman's official music video of "Dem Gone." Secondly, we will pay attention to two live performances he conducted in 2003 – one in Germany and the other Jamaica. Gentleman's rejection at Sting demands our attention to focus on the relationship between content and context. Indeed, often authenticity can be located in the degree to which performers are legitimized by particular communities. Gentleman's performance across multiple transnational sites can perhaps illuminate how varying interactive aesthetic choices, both in and through the performance, worked differently in a social confirmation process. So what does the music video sound like?¹⁶

The opening begins with an introductory drum roll beat cycle of approximately 5 rim shot drum beats. The beats are accompanied by an electric guitar riff that starts off at the lowest range and eventually caps off at the highpoint. The texture of the guitar riff becomes clearly audible with the last beat of the drum roll. With the drums relegated to the background and the electric guitar

¹⁶ See GentlemanVEVO

pushed to the foreground we hear the riff, in its trajectory to the zenith, opening up a wide space. The bass guitar is also present but as the riff opens up it gets drowned out. The depth achieved also engulfs the remainder of the sound except for the occasional “tsssk” of the cymbals. Once the electric riff pitch caps off there is a split second silence. The sequence is repeated once more only this time once the riff reaches its highest peak there is no abrupt break. It thinly fades out and the sturdy bass guitar forcefully transitions in. The slightest details of accented hi hat fills and the descending synth riff fill in the spaces making the transition smooth and the timing feeling precisely right on the money. The weighty repetitive bass line gives the riddim a strong underpinning required to anchor the other instruments.

We now hear the typical one-drop rhythm full with cymbals, hi hats and percussion fills. Midway through the electric guitar that was present in the beginning merges back in. Up until 2.48 it was largely absent. It assumes the previous role, opening up spaces with contrasting frequencies of low to high. The riff alters at 3.00 when it shifts into a trippy synth line. The short, fast, and descending riff peppers the song ever so slightly. Throughout the piece, except in the introduction and closing section, each instrument has its own sort of independent piece of interlocking rhythm structure. The rhythm of the lined up instruments in the opening and finale have a jarring affect.

The song has all the qualities of a reggae song and the slow tempo minus the snare on the 2 and 4 give it that very spacious illusion. The vocal phrasings take advantage of the spaces and interact in interesting ways. For the most part the phrasings are in three mixed gender parts. However, exceptions occur when about 1.40 they start singing in unison. At around 2:33 during the “stand up and don’t you run” part and at 2:45 “the rising of the sun” the vocals are sung in octaves with the lead vocal. While majority of the song is sung in minor there are notable

exceptions. At 2:28 there is a bridge section when the song is in major and the background vocals start providing short “wee-oo” “wee-oo” “wee-oo” punctuations. Gentleman is filling the created space in the eerily similar fashion that traditional reggae artists did. A quintessential example is Bob Marley’s hit “One Love” where at 0.15, 1.16 and 1.34 we hear a mixed parts gender chords being sung in parallel motion. Vocal punctuations such as echoing and humming to fill in spaces was common practice for Marley’s backup trio the I-Threes. Indeed, the sound is typical of the sturdy, amplified bass of one-drop reggae complete with cymbal and snare fills.

The video also provides some interesting imagery worth commenting on. It appears to be filmed in the Indian sub-continent and figures shifting images of Gentleman engaging with the indigenous people. One can see barefoot children in awe of his presence, running and waving at him. At other moments he is riding atop a Bull driven cart surrounded by the children. The imagery then shifts to a beachfront littered with desolate, decaying and rusted marine vessels. The adult natives are depicted working in harsh working conditions salvaging materials, mainly steel, from the rusted decrepit vessels. In contrast to the smiling, happy and innocent children the adults are shown as exhausted, dirty and suffering. The semantic content accompanied by the imagery is critiquing the pollution, destruction and mechanization of Third World countries. In the tercet “ You may live to see today but you know know the end/ Just read the writings on the wall, it's a message we send/ And Babylon will never live to stop the rising of Jah” Gentleman uses Rastafarian oral tropes and rhetorical devices calling for divine intervention in the wake of Babylon’s destruction of mother earth.

Splash Festival is one of Europe’s biggest hip hop and reggae festivals. Held in Germany the festival started in 1998 and occurs over a 3 day period every July. In the 2003 live

performance of “Dem Gone” at Chemnitz¹⁷ the introductory opening is similar to the studio version. The drums, bass, percussion and electric guitar riff all line up. However, after the second drum roll, the sturdy repetitive bass riddim does not transition in. Instead we get a steady pulsating offbeat strumming of the electric guitar “wack...wack...wack.” In addition, the cymbals provide a crisp percussive sound that accents the pulsating rhythm of the offbeat guitar strumming. In the background the organ plays complex rhythmic patterns that add texture. The arrangement, minus the weighty drowning bass line, provides Gentleman with the acoustic space to audibly engage the crowd with the vocal call and response action. It starts off with the mixed vocals of Gentleman and the backup singers crooning “dem gone.” The adjective gone is elongated and stressed sounding like “gooooone” and accentuated in a wavy form. The mixed unison vocals remain silent while the crowd responds “so far away.” This back and forth participatory interaction is repeated several times.

Gentleman continues engaging with the audience and calls on them to “keep the fire burning” and asks to “see every lighter in da air” metaphoric dread talk calling for the burning of destructive ideas. He then calls on the crowd to turn on their lighters and urges them to “burn down Babylon, burn down foolishness, burn down ignorance, burn down fascism.” After the brief dialogue he holds the microphone to his mouth he says “dem gone” and turns the microphone to the audience telling them “your turn now.” This banter goes on with the crowd participating in a celebratory manner. Finally he asks them “are you ready for the bass line.” That cues the bassist, at 1.30, to come in and take over from the light rhythmic pattern –imbuing the sound with the characteristic weighty reggae sound. The rhythmic suspension created by the interlude is thrown into relief by the driving bass and drum. At 2.30, the bass line cuts off again allowing the electric riff, cymbals and organ to assume the light acoustic space. In between the

¹⁷ See mikenairn0608

organ plays a complex repeating pattern. After approximately three repetitions of the pattern the synth riff ends with a short fast descending motion. Gentleman's vocals match the light arrangement in a soothing manner with the mixed backup vocals filling in with punctuations of "ooh ooh." The serenity of the brief instrumental and vocal interlude is violently interrupted at 2.50 with a succession of drum rolls. Gentleman's vocals mirror the aggressive shift from soothing to forcefully angry tone. The bass line emerges back in and the arrangement reverts back to the sturdy one drop arrangement. Right about 3.30 Gentleman introduces the electric guitar player who proceeds to start with a warm overtone and then unleashes into a blistering and intense individual solo performance reminiscent of the hard rock sound. Towards the end the bass line drops out and the light arrangement comes in again giving Gentleman the opportunity to acknowledge each member of the band and the audience. The performance ends on a high note with the crowd applauding loudly.

Gentleman's performance at Sting happened less than six months after the aforementioned Splash event. The limited footage that does exist of Gentleman's Sting performance barely lasts three minutes, suggesting to us that some of the original content has been edited¹⁸ Nonetheless, in those telling minutes we can make several pertinent observations which may explain the negative audience reaction. The opening introduction treats us again with the same sounds as the video and Chemnitz performance. The instruments all line up in a jarring manner where there appears to be no independent interlocking rhythm. At 0.17 we still hear the trippy synth riff that marks the thematic shift and the instruments start independently interlocking on top of the weighty bass line. Gentleman's vocals come on in a soothing manner backed up by equally calming punctuations of the backup vocals. They alternate from punctuations to singing in parallel motion. At 0.40 the instruments go silent and Gentleman calls

¹⁸ See Electricmusicstation

on the crowd to put their hands in the air. In a challenging manner, he asserts that “If your heart is clean and you are not back minded, I want to see your hands in the air.” The footage shows that at least some of the audience members raising their hands. Gentleman then proceeds to start goading the audience by claiming, “If I don’t see your hand in the air that means you’re back minded.” We can infer from his cynical assertion that he probably did not get the response he was looking for.

Incidentally during this interaction at 0.50 the instruments all line up again in a jarring manner and drown his vocal statements. Instead of an acoustic space that can accommodate his vocal engagement we hear the forceful, resounding and jarring instrument arrangement. At exactly 0.58 the footage appears to capture Gentleman turning around and facing the band, who also as if on cue revert back to the customary arrangement. It would not be farfetched to suggest that the band sensing the tension, intervening on his behalf and subtly communicated with him to stop aggravating the crowd and perform. He does, and the mixed vocals join again in parallel motion soothingly uttering “dem gone” repeatedly. The performance continues up until 2.12 when he once again asks the audience “people you want hear the second verse” to which after a brief pause he agitatedly says, “give me some signal.” Again this suggests that he did not receive the response he was looking for. All we hear are inaudible mutterings and sparse whistling. Gentleman proceeds in a calm smooth tone to sing the second verse. The sound matches his vocal style, with the organ rhythmically improvising. Shortly after, by 2.45 both sound and imagery start fading. There was no applause or acknowledgment from the audience nor did the music have any form of closure. The ending lacks any indication that the performance culminated in the normative fashion that music performance often does. Nonetheless, we still

haven't arrived at a better understanding of what happened. So, how do we interpret the footage, given what we now know about the different performances?

By comparing the Splash and Sting performance we can draw conclusions that illuminate the tensions in the multiple subjectivities Gentleman inhabits through his performances. I contend that the dual spaces Gentleman occupies through his music are rooted in what Halifu Osumare calls an Africanist Aesthetic. She defines this aesthetic as

A processual mode of expression that privileges the negotiation of the self in the moment through complex use of rhythmic timing, verbal and non-verbal rhetoric strategies and multiple layers of meaning that draw from its socio-cultural context and audience (16).

Negotiations of the self can occur when one is confronted with the multiple spatial sites other than their own. The varying socio-cultural sites compel one to dialogically engage with the context. As a result of this engagement one forges new subjectivities and performances. One key component of the aesthetic is the “ability to convey multiple layers of meaning that draw from socio-cultural context and audience” (22). This is a dialogical process between site, performer and audience. Gentleman's performances in Europe and Jamaica give us the opportunity to test this theory.

There are several differences that we can distinguish from the different live performance across multiple sites. Firstly, in Germany during the two interludes when he engaged with the audience, the acoustic space was light enough to accommodate his dialogue effectively. The rhythmic timing was synchronous and the interaction between various musical elements was fluidly executed. Gentleman spontaneously provided cues and capitalized on the aural space in the sound to engage the audience. The timing and dynamic was sufficient enough for him to be heard. Each time, after both interludes the heavy bass merged back in to drive the sound. In

Jamaica, the bass line was never dropped from the arrangement. It was always present even while he was making statements and persisted albeit in a less firm and toned down manner. The thick texture, increased tempo and dynamics created a dense and sealed up acoustic space that left little room for Gentleman's vocal statements. If he intended to communicate effectively and fulfill the Africanist Aesthetic requirements, through complex use of rhythmic timing, the bass should have dropped.

Secondly, in Germany the purposeful introduction of the solo electric guitar was meant to affect the European ear conditioned to recognize the characteristic sound of electric hard rock guitar; implying to the predominantly white audience that this music can be yours as well. At Sting we hear no such electric guitar solo. Thirdly, he was able to effectively communicate with multiple layers of meaning that drew from both site and audience. The reference to burn down fascism is extremely contextual and employs Rasta metaphors to articulate a specific European lived experience. The Jamaican performance neither references Babylon nor fascism. In that respect he was able to distinguish between the different sites and draw on socio-cultural context and audience. Well the question still stands, if he was able to astutely delineate his performances according to site, socio-cultural context and audience where did he go wrong?

We can account for two factors that lead to the Jamaican audience's dismissal of Gentleman. Firstly, he failed to appropriately fill an authorial presence before the audience. In Germany, he was able to astutely interact with the crowd and direct them in calls to action. The democratic participation of the audience validated his leadership. He lead they followed willingly and enthusiastically. Well, in Jamaica that was not the case. It appears that Gentleman presumed he would automatically be granted the privilege to direct the audience. Keep in mind he was a relatively new artist in his debut performance before one of the harshest reggae

audiences. Vocal call and response statements often assume unequal power relations between performer and audience. The performer is the authoritative figure who calls to action and the audience follows in response. Gentleman had not proven himself to the Jamaican audience for them to relinquish their democratic right to choose whether to participate or not.

What is perhaps more salient in this regards is that when his efforts failed to encourage the audience Gentleman resorted to cynically provoking them. In hindsight he now understands how the interaction works and states, “I was always dreaming to perform on Sting, but is a bottle fling ... me talk too long, me talk too much. The people did not know me yet” (Cooke). The vocal aesthetic required a different approach in Jamaica and he failed to weigh in on the site and audience before attempting to lead. In addition, the constant talking causes breaks in the flow of the sound. Roots reggae has always been anchored by the bass and relied on the coherence of the independent interlocking rhythmic patterns provided by the drums, percussions and choppy guitar strums.

Secondly, the choice to perform roots reggae before this particular audience further indicated his lack of sufficient immersion in socio-cultural ground. The roots reggae style of Bob Marley is no longer considered the Jamaican public’s first choice of music-it is dancehall. The current generation of consumers prefers the brute and aggressive lyrical content of dancehall. They are drawn to the digital recordings that have rapidly accelerated the tempo and rhythm of reggae. Indeed as, Chang politely puts it, “ today for all intents and purposes, reggae in Jamaica is dancehall, reggae magazines lavish ecstatic reviews on culture groups ... but ghetto masses couldn’t give a hoot about such music” (60).

Gentleman openly admits his preference for the roots reggae sound. The musical beauty of roots reggae appealed to him at an early age. That is the sound he sought to reproduce before

this audience, naively ignoring or unwittingly ignorant of the changing taste cultures of Jamaican society. Nonetheless, his current knowledge of the social ground and music styles indicate a more mature understanding of the subjectivities he chooses to inhabit. Certainly, Gentleman has moved on from performing in roots reggae style and his repertoire has expanded into new musical forms. In fact after over 10 years of immersion in the social ground perceptions of him have changed. No longer are music journalists discussing his patois or his “whiteness” but focus on his musical abilities. A more recent 2010 review by Angus Taylor of *Reggae Ville* refreshingly points out the scope of Gentleman’s musical abilities.

Few represent the much championed concept of “diversity” as Germany’s Gentleman ... [who] has hung his entire fifth album on the theme. Tanya Stephens duets with Gentleman for the acoustic love ballad Another Melody...while Bobby Konders supplies the frenetic and noisy dancehall piece No Time To Play. The double CD boasts some welcome incursions into “Nu Roots”....[...] Red rose effort Bridge Over Wall features a hobbling guitar motif that sounds like it came off a vintage Phil Pratt 45 (2).

The point of alliance on that fateful night at Sting marked what was to become a sustained career for Gentleman. His failure to understand the social confirmation process and rules of engagement only encouraged him to connect with the socio-cultural formation even more - an aggrieved community whose sound, beat and rhythm carried a poignant sense of conviction and intensity. Musically it was able to sonically deliver and compliment a parochial particularity whose depth of feeling was drawn both from a troubled historicity and contemporary lived experiences. Indeed, musical beauty and listening practices can shape and inform our sense of self in this world. For Gentleman the process went through several stages before culminating in that fateful

night at Sting. For what it was worth he now does have the social confirmation and authority that comes with it.

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